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Introduction

James Jennings

University of Massachusetts Boston

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Introduction

by James Jennings

This issue of the *Trotter Review* focuses on a broad range of questions and issues concerning the economic development of the urban black community. This subject is timely and important given the continuing crisis surrounding the social and economic development of black communities in urban America. Poverty, poor health, unemployment, inadequate housing, and other related concerns, will continue to plague black communities to a greater extent than other communities until effective and comprehensive economic development strategies can be developed and pursued.

This issue of the *Trotter Review* challenges the notion suggested by some that the pursuit of economic development strategies in black communities is futile and wasteful. Some observers have argued that public policy to develop the black community economically should not be pursued, but, instead, the means to escape it should be enlarged and made accessible. Many individuals who make this claim are not familiar with the grassroots, everyday potential resources that can be tapped in these communities. In various ways, this issue of the *Trotter Review* touches upon some of these resources, as well as the strategies that might be considered in pursuing more effective economic and community development.

Robert C. Hayden presents a history of black businesses in Boston. Lenneal J. Henderson describes some of the broad challenges and potential strategies that black leadership should consider in pursuing the economic development of their communities in the current period. Eugene "Gus" Newport, the former mayor of Berkeley, California, reminds us that, strictly speaking, economic development is not necessarily community development, but the latter must be an important basis for the former. Curtis Stokes examines the role of black political leadership in economic development. Rhonda Williams reviews the various explanations for the continuing high levels of black youth unemployment.

Previous studies have illustrated similarities in the poverty experiences of blacks and Puerto Ricans. Edwin Meléndez explores—and explodes—a few prominent myths about the nature and causes of Puerto Rican poverty and offers potential strategies for this community's economic development. The articles by James Jennings and Joan Wallace-Benjamin, as well as Harold Horton's interview with the president of the Greater Roxbury Chamber of Commerce, Leon T. Nelson, offer some possible components of a potential overall strategic framework for economic and community development in urban black communities.



In addition to the essays included in this issue, the editors thought it important to include an appendix listing the myriad reports published by the Trotter Institute on economic and community development. We hope this list is useful for readers who want to pursue more detailed information and analysis regarding this topic.

James Jennings is director of the Trotter Institute and professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts at Boston. He is the author of a number of books including *The Politics of Black Empowerment: The Transformation of Black Activism in Urban America*, and *Understanding the Nature of Poverty in Urban America*.